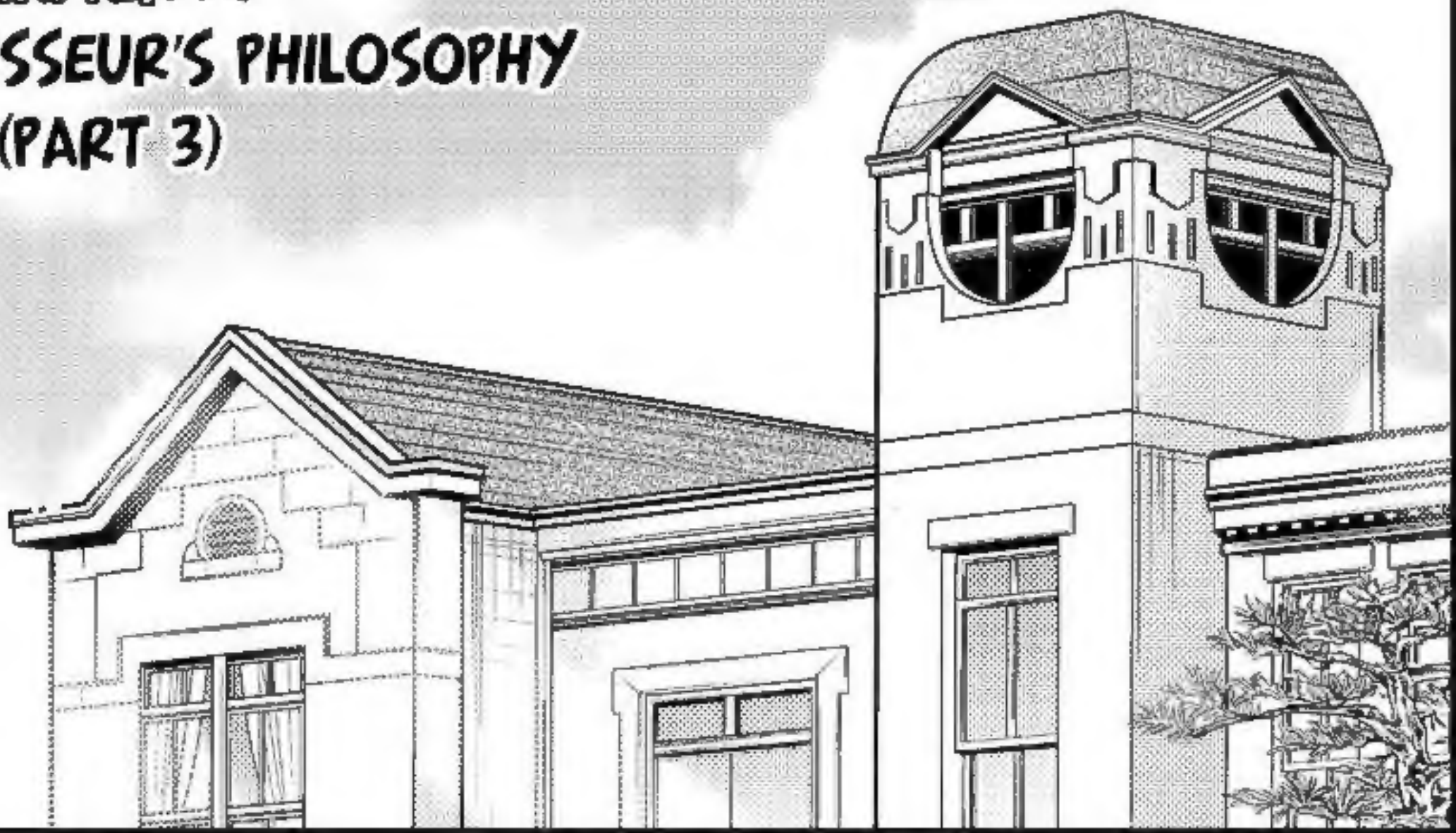


CHAPTER 12

THE CONNOISSEUR'S PHILOSOPHY (PART 3)



THANK YOU ALL
FOR COMING TO
CELEBRATE THIS
MILESTONE IN
MY LIFE.

IT BRINGS
ME GREAT
PLEASURE...

...TO
WELCOME
ALL OF
YOU HERE
TODAY.

ART BY ICHIHA AKIZUKI
WRITTEN BY MAI MOCHIZUKI
CHARACTER DESIGNS BY
SHIZU YAMAUCHI



I
FIRST TOOK
AN INTEREST
IN ANTIQUES
WHEN...

...

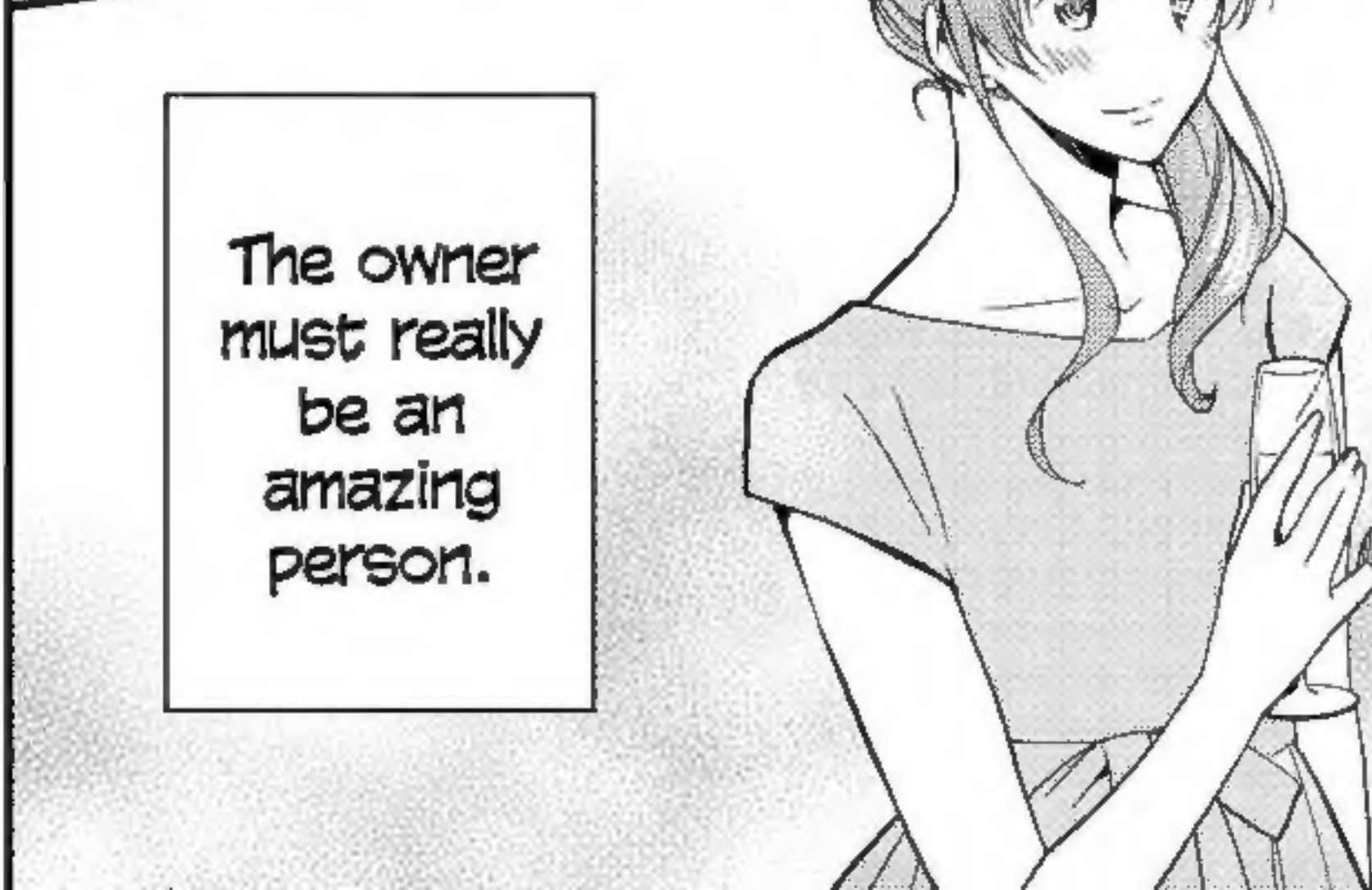


That's
Yanagihara-
sensei...

And his
fellow
appraisers.

And
there's
Hanamura-
sensei, the
flower
arrangement
teacher.

Mieko-
san and
Ueda-
san are
here.

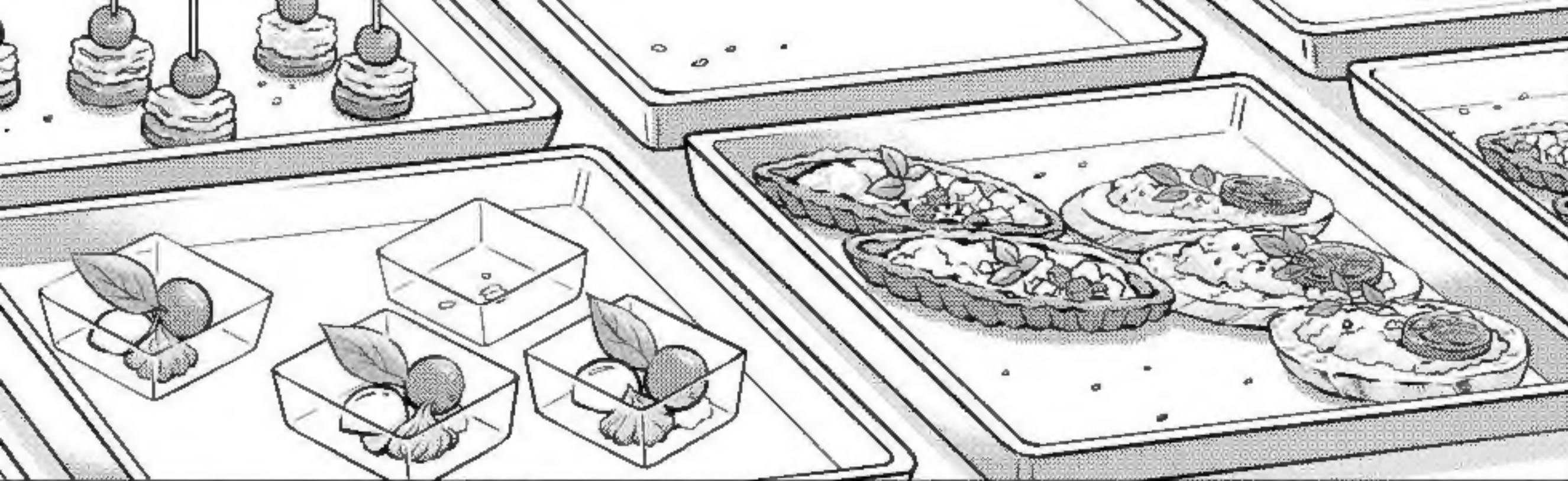


The owner
must really
be an
amazing
person.

So
many
people
came.







I SEE
YOU'RE AS
LIVELY
AS EVER,
SENSEI!

HE WENT
BACK TO
MINGLING.



WHERE'S
HOLMES-
SAN?



I'M
FLATTERED,
AND I KNOW
I'VE MADE
A LOT OF
TROUBLE
FOR YOU.

BUT I
WON'T BE
DOING TV
AGAIN.

COME ON!
DON'T
BE LIKE
THAT!

THAT'S
SHIMIZU-
SAN, THE
PRODUCER
OF THE
SHOW.



TRUTH BE
TOLD, WE'RE
PITCHING A
REMAKE OF
HEIRLOOM
HUNTERS!



SO, WHAT
DO YOU SAY?
HOW ABOUT
MAKING YOUR
RETURN TO
SHOWBIZ?



H-HEY!
WAIT A
MINUTE,
SENSEI!



TODAY'S MY
BIRTHDAY.
I'D RATHER
NOT SPEND
IT ANGRY.

SO
THAT'S
ENOUGH
ABOUT
WORK.



I GUESS
HE DIDN'T
JUST COME
TO CELEBRATE
THE OWNER'S
SPECIAL
DAY...



IF
YOU SAY SO,
THEN LET'S GO!
MASAMUNE'S
DOING A PER-
FORMANCE!

HUH? OH,
NOTHING...

WHAT'S
WRONG,
AOI?







CRASH





IT
SOUNDED
LIKE IT CAME
FROM THE
EXHIBITION
ROOM.

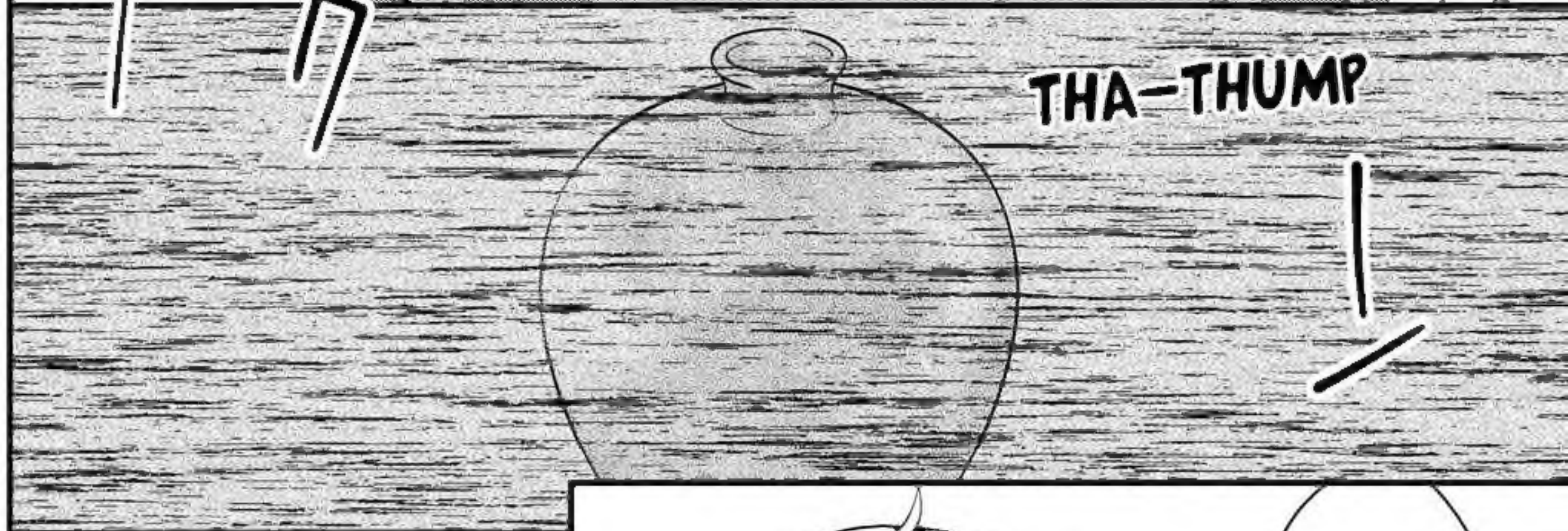


YEAH...

WHAT
WAS THAT?
SOUNDED LIKE
SOMETHING
BREAKIN'...



THE
EXHIBITION
ROOM?



THA-THUMP



Exhibition Room

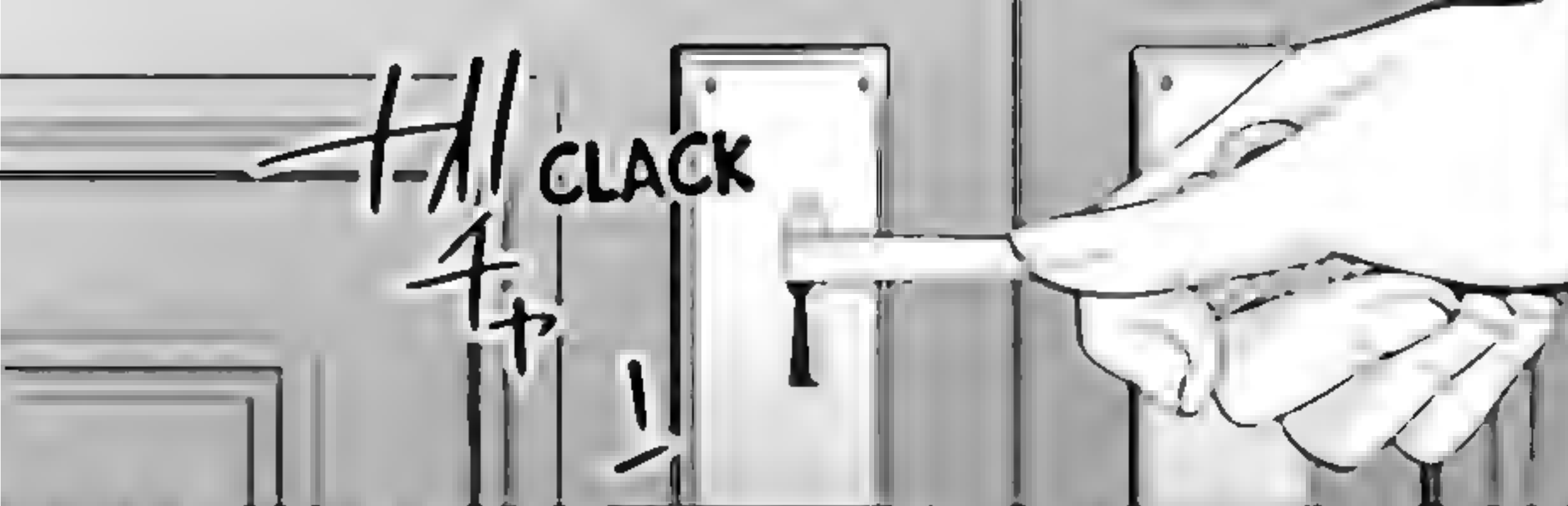
展示室

R-
RIGHT!



AOI-CHAN,
YOU STILL
GOT THE
KEY?

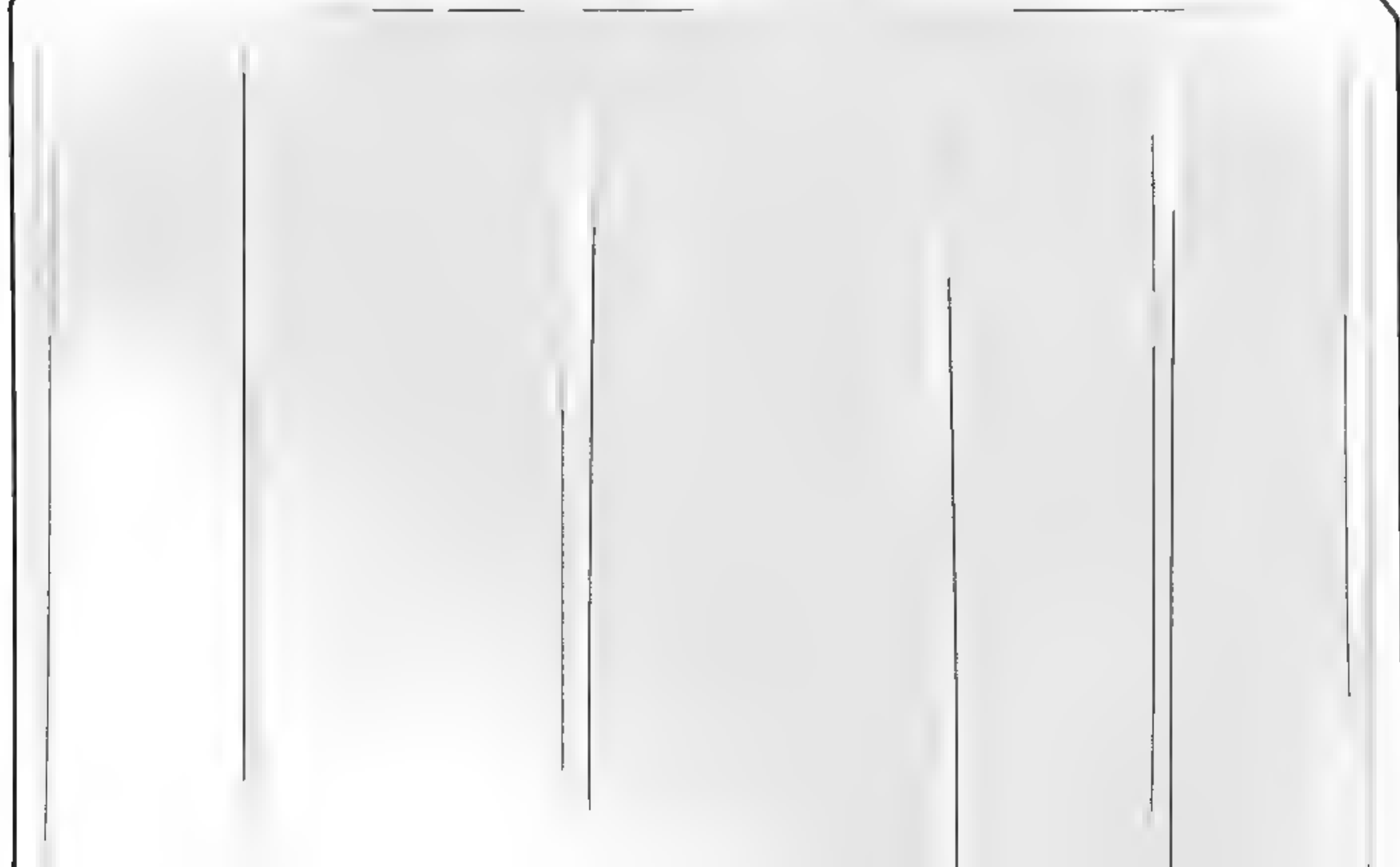
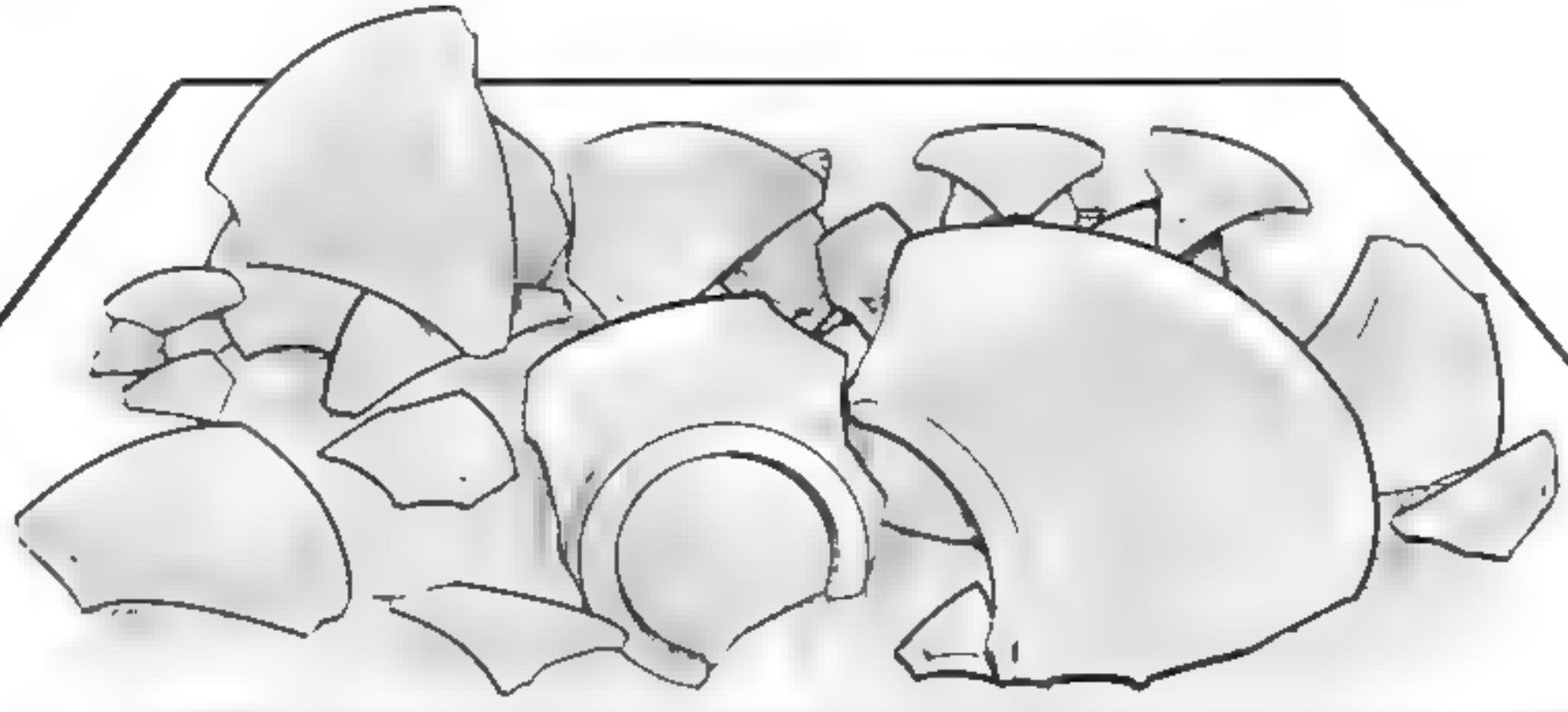
LET'S GO
CHECK
IT OUT!



PLEASE,
OH PLEASE
LET IT BE
JUST MY
IMAGINA-
TION...

TH-
THAT'S....!







YOU
SAYIN' THE
URN JUST
BROKE
ITSELF?

THE MOST
VALLABLE
THING IN THE
ROOM JUST
HAPPENED
TO BREAK?



THE
WINDOWS
ARE ALL
SHUT,
TOO.



SOMEONE MAY
HAVE DONE IT
INTENTIONALLY.



SHIMIZU-
SAN?





THEY MIGHT
HAVE COOKED
UP A PLAN TO
DESTROY THAT
PRECIOUS VASE
OF HIS.

I'M JUST
SAYING THAT
IF SOMEONE
HAPPENED TO
BE HOLDING
A GRUDGE,

EVERYONE
KNOWS YAGA-
SHIRA-SENSEI
SHOWS OFF
HIS CELADON
WHENEVER
HE HAS
A CROWD
OVER.

WHAT'S
THAT
SUPPOSED
TO
MEAN?



IF I
WERE TO
GIVE IT A
TITLE, IT
WOULD
BE...

THAT JUST
SUPPORTS
THE THEORY
THAT IT WAS
PREMEDI-
TATED.

BUT
NO ONE
COULD
GET INTO
THIS
ROOM.



THIS MIGHT
JUST GET
INTERESTING.

"THE CASE
OF THE LOCKED
ROOM ANTIQUE-
BREAKING."



...IS HERE TO
CELEBRATE
THE OWNER'S
BIRTHDAY.

EVERYONE
WHO CAME TO
THE PARTY,
TODAY...



BUT
WHO WAS
IT? WHO
BROKE THE
CELADON?



DOES THIS
MEAN ONE
OF THEM
SECRETLY
HATES
HIM?



CLENCH 4,



BUT



I DON'T
EVEN
WANT TO
CONSIDER
IT...



He and
the owner
butted
heads in
the past.

They
even
argued
today,
too.

There's
a good
chance
Shimizu-san
is holding
a grudge.



The
people
with
motives
...

First,
there's
Shimizu-
san the
producer.



So
that feels
like a dead
end.

The
owner has
bad blood
with Don
Kageyama,
too.

But
he's not
actually here,
and I don't
think anyone
came on
his behalf,
either.

BUT
WAIT...

THE
MOTIVE MIGHT
NOT JUST BE
A GRUDGE
AGAINST THE
OWNER...



Does
that mean
Yoshie-san
might have
done it?

...THAT I
ACTUALLY
THOUGHT
ABOUT
BREAKING
ONE
ONCE.

HE'S
SO OB-
SESSED
WITH
THEM...

What if the
culprit had
a grudge
against the
vase itself?



OH,
DARN
IT!



And if
Yoshie-
san is a
suspect...
then so
is the
manager.

He
also has
complex
feelings
about
antiques...



BUT SHE
WOULDN'T
DO
SOMETHING
SO PETTY,
WOULD
SHE?

**I DON'T
LIKE
DOUBTING
PEOPLE
LIKE
THIS!**

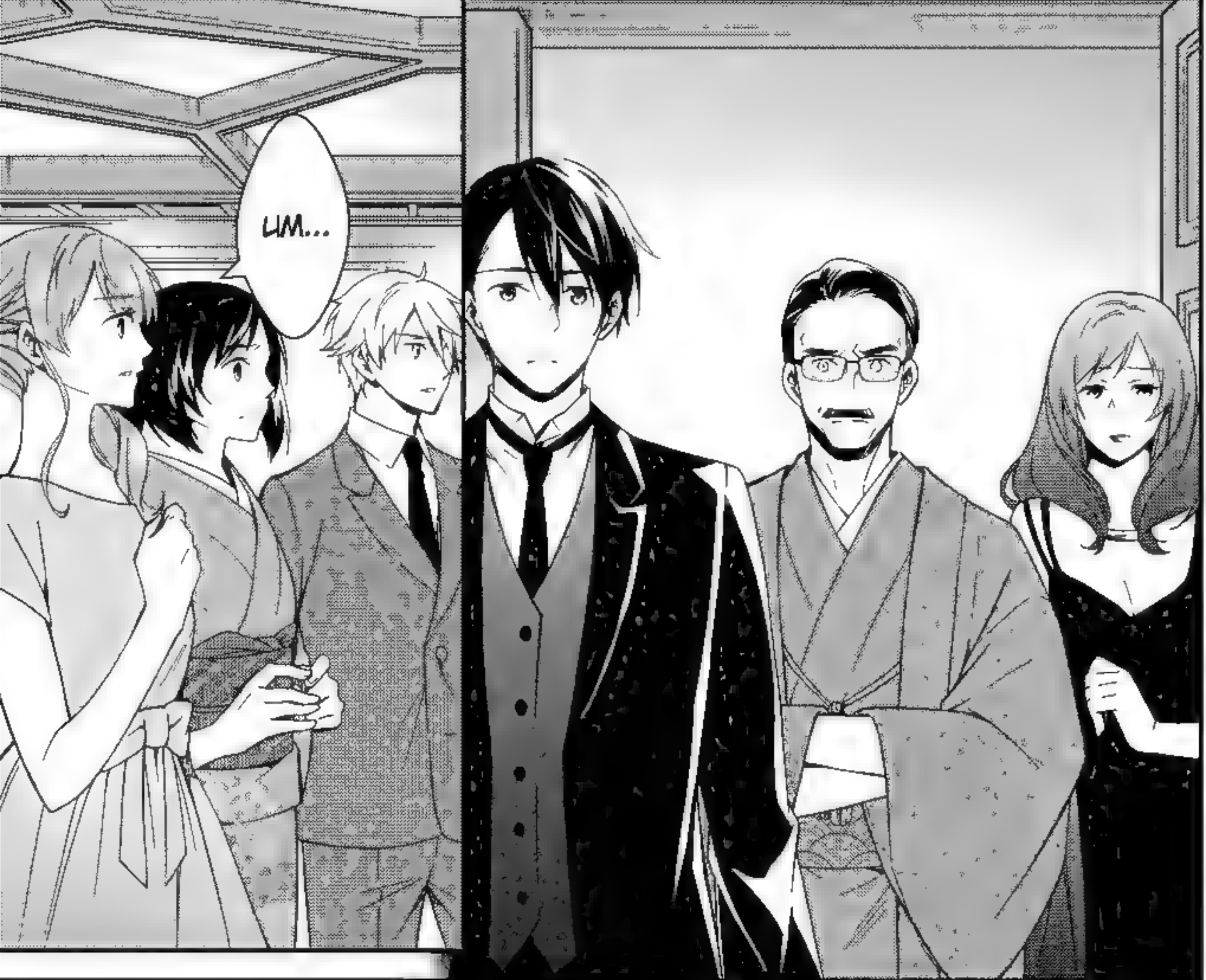


HOLMES-
SAN!



WHAT
ARE YOU
ALL DOING
HERE?









WH-WHAT
DOES THIS
MEAN?

THE
COLOR AN'
LUMINOSITY
ARE ALL
WRONG.

THAT
THERE'S
A FAKE.

...HUH?



ASK
KIYO-
TAKA!

DUNNN

HOW
SHOULD I
KNOW?



AOI-
SAN.

COULD
YOU SHARE
THE DETAILS
OF WHAT
HAPPENED
WITH ME?

OH... OF
COURSE!

YOU'D
PUT ME ON
THE SPOT
FOR EVEN
THIS...



THEN
NOBODY
COULD HAVE
GOTTEN
IN OR OUT
OF THIS
ROOM.

AND
WHEN WE
CAME TO
SEE...

THE
VASE WAS
ALREADY
SMASHED.



THE
REAL VASE
HAD ALREADY
BEEN
SWAPPED FOR
THE FAKE.

IT MEANS
THAT BY THE
TIME EVERY-
BODY LEFT
THE ROOM,

THAT
SIMPLIFIES
THINGS.



OH!
THAT'S
RIGHT!

DID ANYTHING
HAPPEN THAT,
FOR EXAMPLE...
TURNED YOUR
ATTENTION TO THE
CHANDELIER, OR
PERHAPS THE
PAINTING ON
THE OPPOSITE
WALL?

WHILE
YOU WERE
ALL IN
HERE
EARLIER,



WITH
EVERYBODY
WATCHING?
THAT'S
NOT
POSSIBLE!

WITH CLEVER
MISDIRECTION,
IT'S VERY
POSSIBLE.

...AND STOOD
IN FRONT OF
THE FAKE WHILE
EVERYONE WAS
LEAVING SO NO
ONE WOULD
SEE IT.

THEN THEY
MIMICKED
MY FATHER'S
VOICE TO CALL
EVERYONE BACK
TO THE PARTY
ROOM...

WHILE
EVERYONE WAS
DISTRACTED, THE
CULPRIT SWAPPED
THE REAL VASE
FOR THE FAKE.

Everything's
ready!

30
Culprit

30
Culprit



THEY KNEW
THEY COULD QUIETLY
RETRIEVE THE DEVICE
WHEN EVERYONE
CAME TO SEARCH THE
ROOM, MEANING
NO EVIDENCE
WOULD BE LEFT
BEHIND.

...TO PLAY
A PRE-
RECORDED
SOUND OF
SOMETHING
BEING
SMASHED.

THEN THEY
WAITED FOR
JUST THE
RIGHT
MOMENT...

AND THE
CULPRITS
WOULD HAVE
TO BE SKILLED
WITH MIS-
DIRECTION AND
MANIPULA-
TION...

YES,
IT WOULD
CERTAINLY
BE DIFFICULT
TO PULL OFF
ALONE.

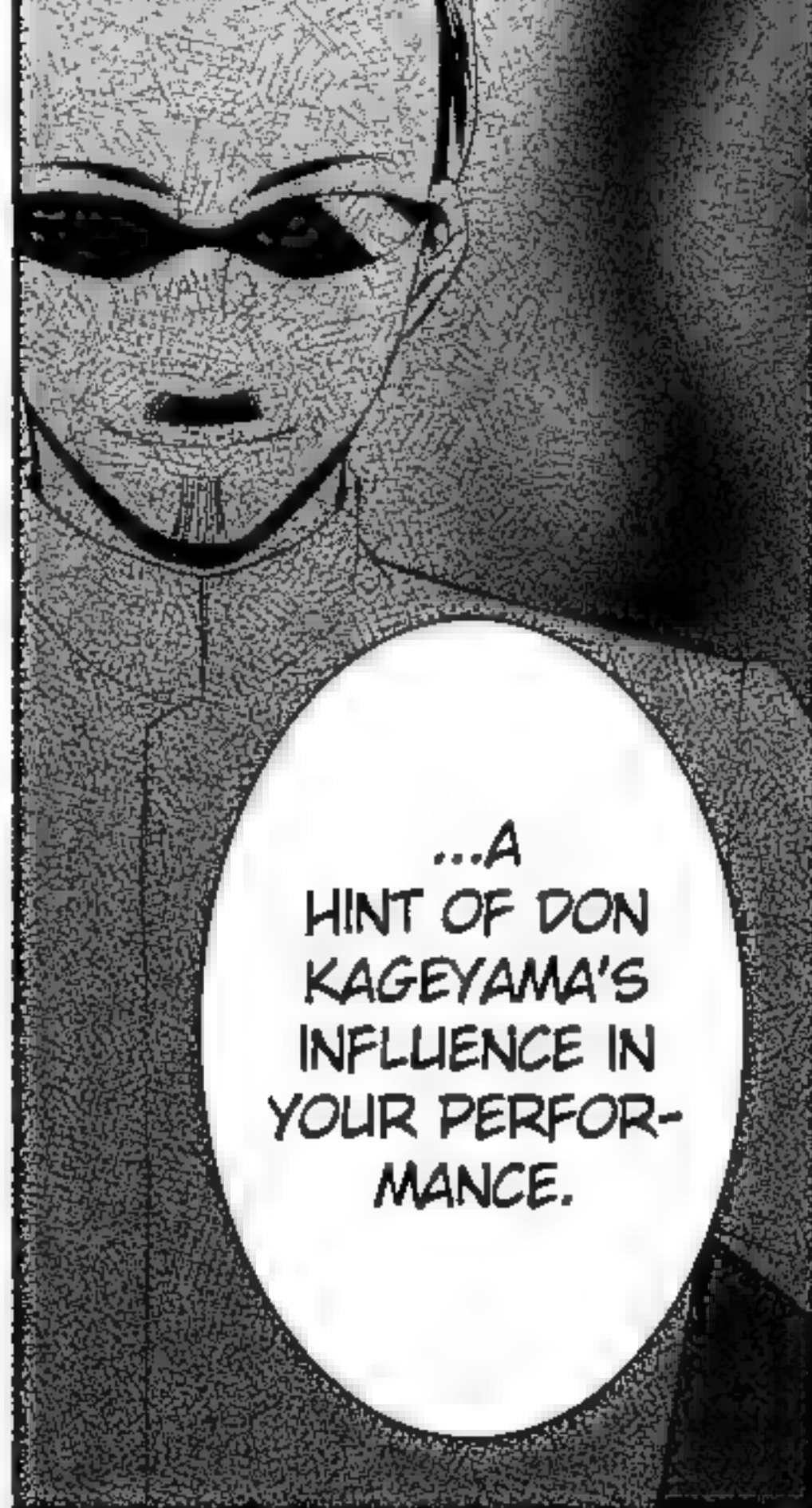
I
GUESS IT'S
TECHNICALLY
POSSIBLE,
BUT...



MASAMLNE.

YOU'RE
BEHIND
THIS.





...A
HINT OF DON
KAGEYAMA'S
INFLUENCE IN
YOUR PERFOR-
MANCE.



I DON'T
KNOW WHAT
EXACTLY YOUR
CONNECTION
IS.

BUT I
SAW...



THEN I
GUESS WE
CAN'T DENY
IT.

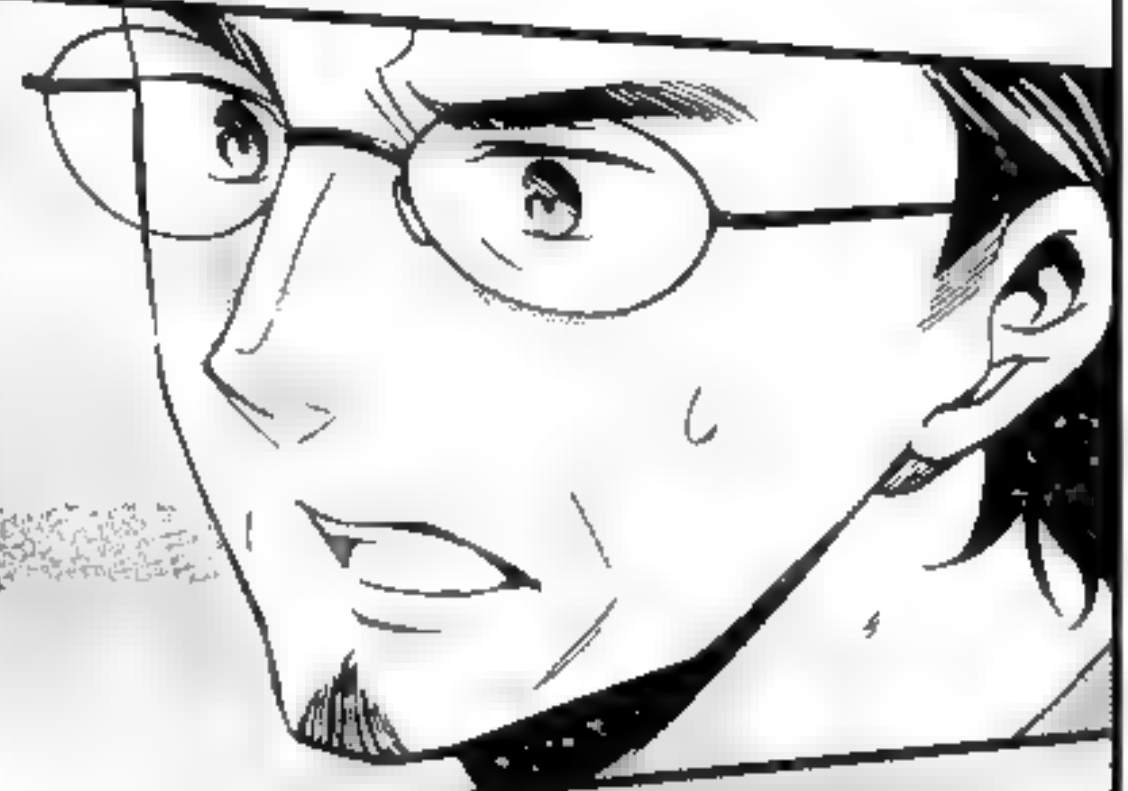
IF
YOU'RE
GONNA
INSIST...



THE
CELADON
VASE!

THANK
GOOD-
NESS!

SO YOU TWO
REALLY WERE
BEHIND IT?
BUT WHY...?



KAGEYAMA-
SAN SAVED
US!

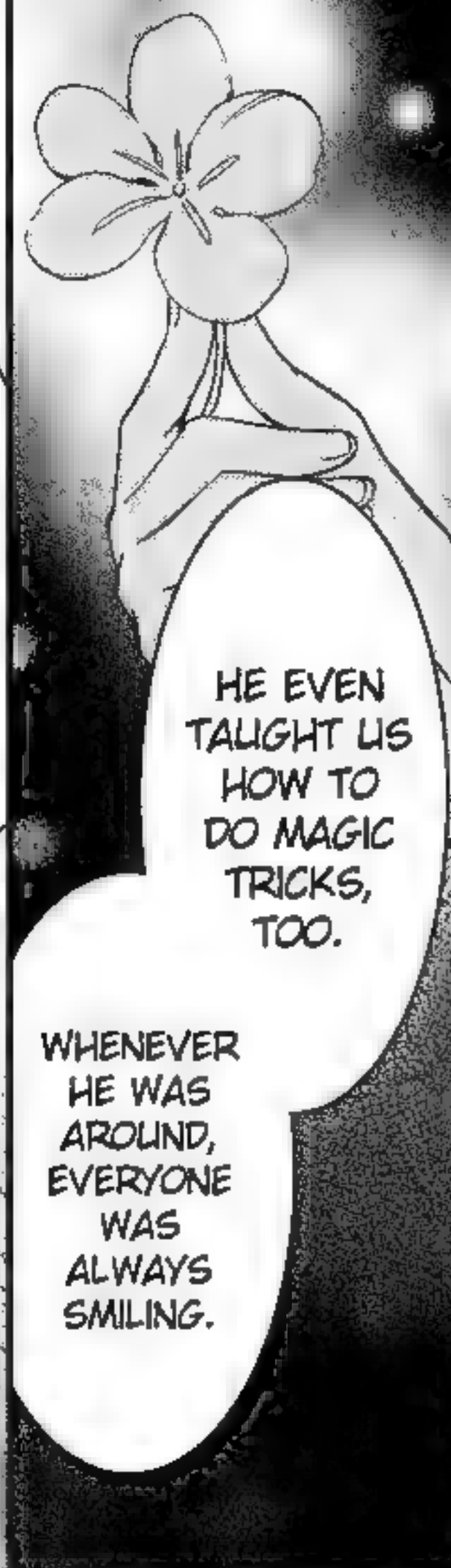
BECAUSE
DON KAGE-
YAMA...



DECIDING
WE WANTED
TO BE LIKE
KAGEYAMA-
SAN...

...IS WHAT
GOT US
WHERE
WE ARE
TODAY!

HE'S THE
MAN WHO
INSPIRED US!
THE MAN
WHO GAVE
US HOPE! A
DREAM!



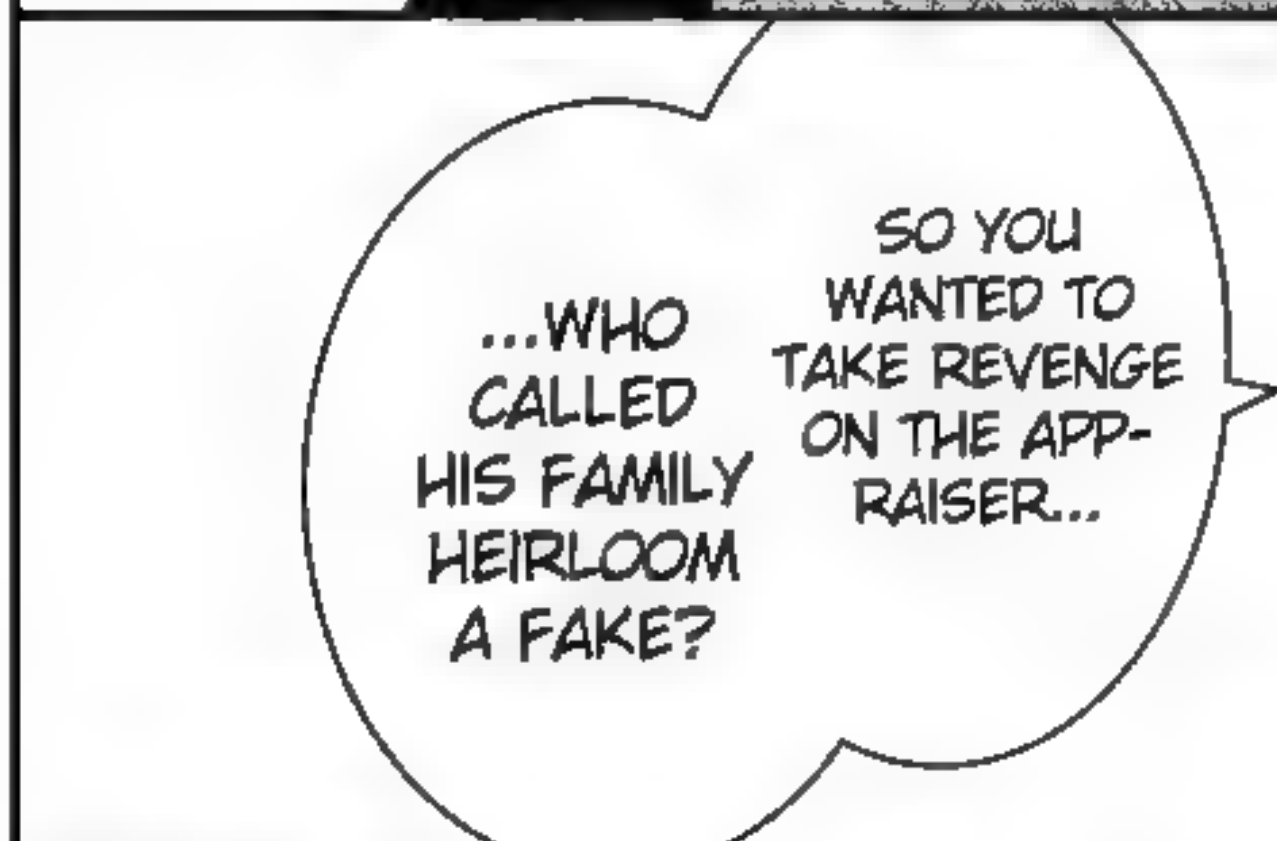
HE EVEN
TAUGHT US
HOW TO
DO MAGIC
TRICKS,
TOO.

WHENEVER
HE WAS
AROUND,
EVERYONE
WAS
ALWAYS
SMILING.



WE NEVER
HAD A FAMILY.
WE WERE
RAISED IN AN
ORPHANAGE.

KAGEYAMA-
SAN OFTEN
CAME BY TO DO
MAGIC SHOWS
FOR THE KIDS
THERE.



...WHO
CALLED
HIS FAMILY
HEIRLOOM
A FAKE?

SO YOU
WANTED TO
TAKE REVENGE
ON THE APP-
RAISER...



...WHEN
THAT MAN
CALLED HIS
PRECIOUS
FAMILY
TREASURE
A FAKE.

WE'LL NEVER
FORGET HOW
CRUSHED
KAGEYAMA-
SAN
LOOKED...



WE
WERE IN THE
AUDIENCE THE
DAY THAT
EPISODE WAS
SHOT.



I'M SORRY,
BUT YOU'VE
SORELY UN-
DERESTIMATED
US.

THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN THE REAL
CELADON AND YOUR
FAKE WAS SO
GLARING THAT IT
WAS OBVIOUS AT
A GLANCE.

WE THOUGHT,
"THIS SO-CALLED
CONNOISSEUR
DOESN'T KNOW
WHAT HE'S
TALKING
ABOUT!"

SO
WE DECIDED
TO MESS WITH
HIM. WE'D
TRICK HIM INTO
THINKING HIS
OWN PRECIOUS
VASE WAS
BROKEN...

THEN
WE'D MOCK
HIM AND TELL
HIM IT WAS
A FAKE!



THE
HELL
DID YOU
SAY?



ENOUGH,
MASATAKA.

...KIYOTAKA-
SAN, WAS
IT?

IF
YOU "CONN-
OISSEURS"
ARE SO
SHARP...



WHY
DON'T WE
HAVE A
LITTLE
COMPETI-
TION?



AS
FOR THE
WAGER...

IF YOU LOSE,
YOU HAVE TO GET
ON YOUR HANDS
AND KNEES TO
APOLOGIZE FOR
EMBARRASSING
OUR BENEFACTOR
ON YOUR
GRANDFATHER'S
BEHALF.



HOW
ABOUT A
HAND OF
POKER?



CARDS?



IF
THIS WILL
SATISFY
YOU...

**ALL THE
OWNER
DID WAS
TELL THE
TRUTH!**

WAIT
A MINUTE!
THIS IS
OUTRAG-
EOUS!

I
MEAN...



I
ACCEPT YOUR
CHALLENGE.

**HOLMES-
SAN!**

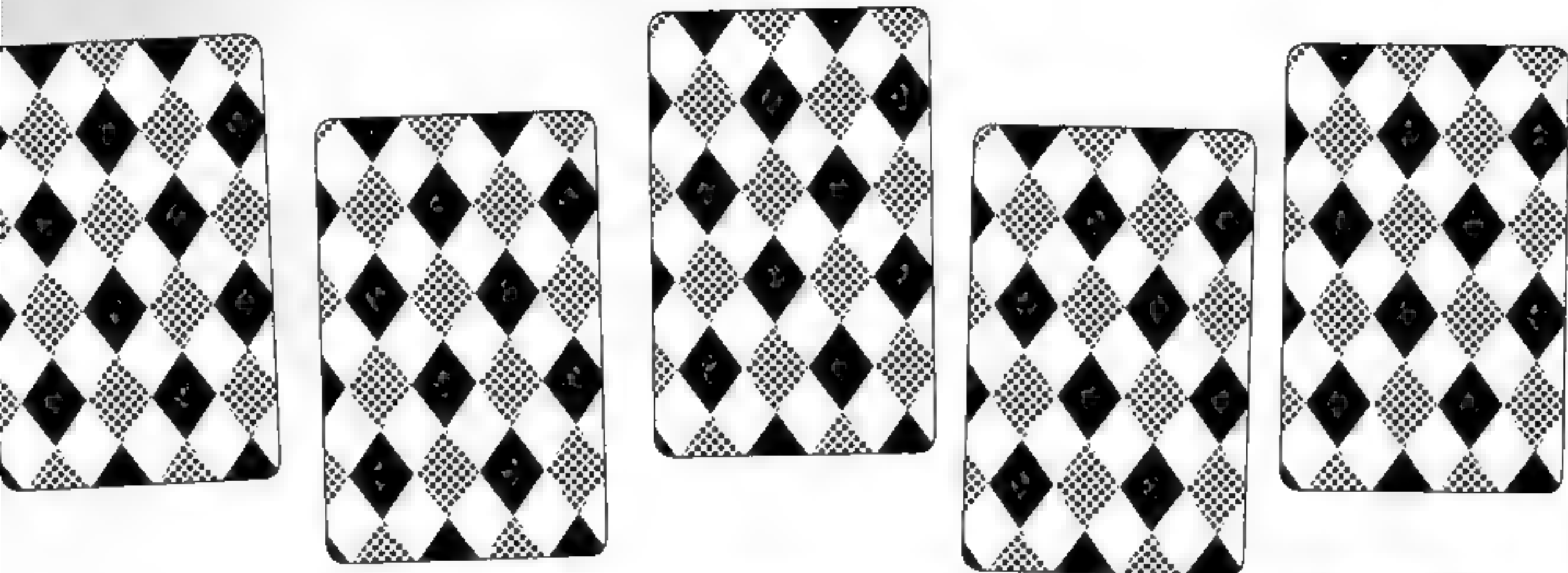


JUST SO
YOU KNOW,
MUNYOSHI'S A
WORLD-CLASS
CARD SHARK.



YOU SEEM
PRETTY
CONFIDENT.







NO.



Y-
YEAH!

AT
LEAST
LOOK
AT THE
CARDS
FIRST!

YOU'RE
GIVING
UP TOO
EARLY!



AND WE'RE
ONLY PLAYING
A SINGLE
ROUND,
SO THAT'S
THAT.

MEANWHILE,
I HAVE
A JUNK
HAND.

MUNEYOSHI
HAS A FULL
HOUSE, WITH
TWO ACES AND
THREE KINGS.



HOW
DID
YOU...



IN TRUTH, YOU
WERE MERELY
SWITCHING THEM
BACK AND FORTH
TO MAINTAIN
THE ORIGINAL
ORDER.

BUT
YOU WERE
JUST USING
SLEIGHT OF
HAND TO
MAKE IT
LOOK THAT
WAY.

IT
APPEARED
YOU
SHUFFLED
THEM
WELL,

...WERE
ARRANGED IN
A WAY THAT
WOULD GIVE
YOU THE
SUPERIOR
HAND.

THE
CARDS
AS YOU
REVEALED
THEM...

**HE WAS
ABLE TO SEE
THROUGH ALL
OF THAT IN AN
INSTANT?**



THIS IS
HARDLY
A FAIR
COMPETI-
TION.

YOUR
SLEIGHT
OF HAND IS
SUPERB,
HOWEVER...

TAP



I
WON'T STAND
FOR YOU MAKIN'
LIGHT OF
CONNOISSEURS.

ALL
RIGHT,
KIYO-
TAKA.





HOW-
EVER...

I'M SURE
THAT'S WHY
KAGEYAMA-
SAN'S FAMILY
TREASURED
IT.



THE VASE
KAGEYAMA-
SAN HAD
WAS A VERY
WELL-MADE
COUNTERFEIT.

IT'S NOT
SURPRISIN'
THAT PEOPLE
WOULD THINK
IT WAS
VALUABLE.

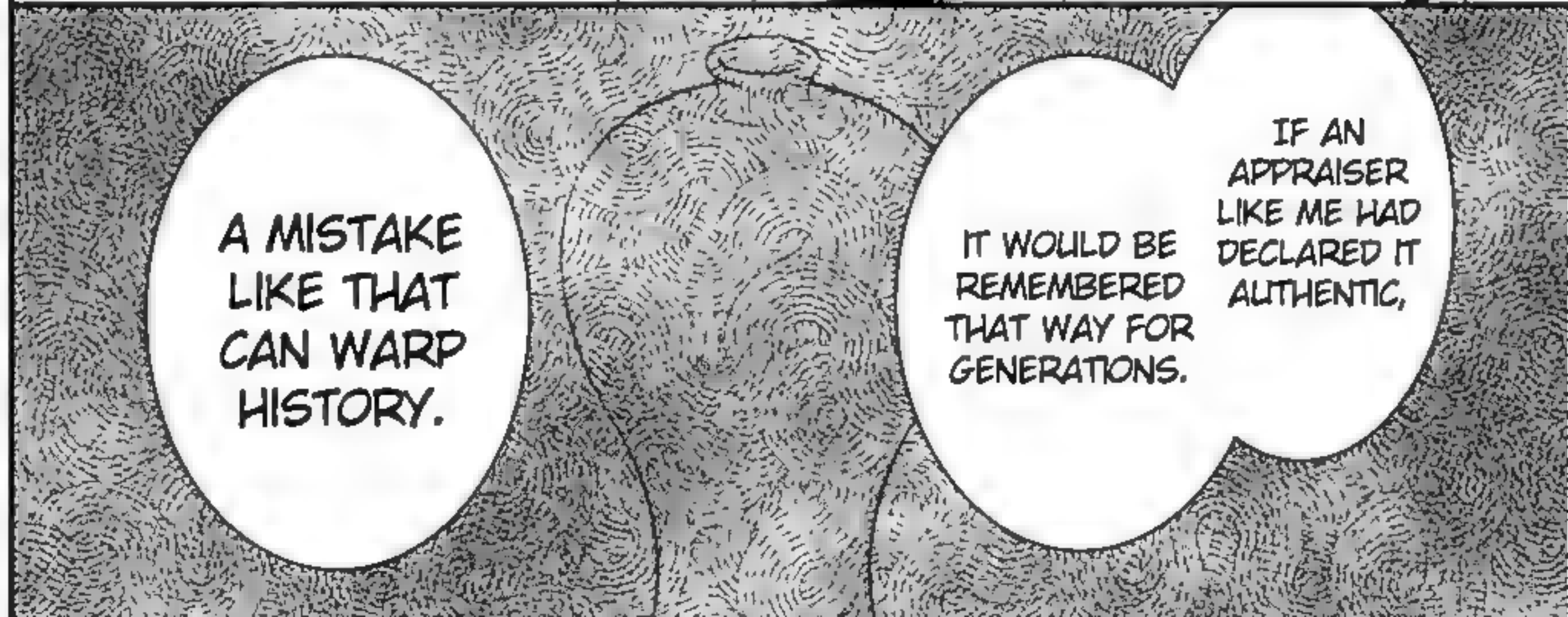


OWNER...



I
CAN'T GO
CALLIN' IT
THE REAL
DEAL.

A FAKE
IS STILL
A FAKE.



A MISTAKE
LIKE THAT
CAN WARP
HISTORY.

IT WOULD BE
REMEMBERED
THAT WAY FOR
GENERATIONS.

IF AN
APPRAISER
LIKE ME HAD
DECLARED IT
AUTHENTIC,



I
CAN'T LOOK
AT A FAKE
AND SAY IT'S
REAL.

EVEN
IF I FEEL
TERRIBLE
ABOUT IT,

SO
NO MATTER
HOW MUCH
MONEY YOU
OFFER, NO
MATTER HOW
MANY TIMES
YOU ASK...

THAT'S THE
RESPON-
SIBILITY WE
APPRAISERS
BEAR.



THAT
IS...

...MY
PHILOSOPHY
AS A CONN-
OISSEUR.



NGH...

THE
PHILOSOPHY
OF A
CONNOIS-
SEUR...



WE'RE
SORRY.





I
THOUGHT
THAT'S WHY
YOU SAID
WHAT YOU
DID.

...THAT
YOU JUST
DIDN'T LIKE
KAGEYAMA-
SAN.

I WAS SO
CONVINCED...



BUT
WE DIDN'T
CONSIDER IT
FROM YOUR
PERSPEC-
TIVE.

WE THOUGHT
YOU SHOULD HAVE
GONE ALONG WITH
THINGS FOR THE
SAKE OF THE
SHOW AND SAID
IT WAS REAL.

EVEN IF
IT WAS
FAKE,



I'M JUST
GLAD YA
UNDERSTAND
NOW.

お
PAT
ん



SO HOW ABOUT ANOTHER TOAST?

WE'VE STILL GOT LOTS OF FOOD AND BOOZE LEFT,



WELL, THAT'S THE END OF THAT.



YEAH, I WAS LOSING IT.

I WAS KINDA FREAKIN' OUT FOR A MINUTE THERE!

WHEW, I'M GLAD THAT ALL WORKED OUT.



WHAT?



HOLMES-SAN SCARES ME.

THERE'S JUST SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIM...





SITUATIONS
WHERE I
LOSE MY
TEMPER AND
FORGET
MYSELF...

I'VE BEEN
IN SIMILAR
SITUATIONS
BEFORE...

AND
I END UP
FRIGHTENING
THE PEOPLE
AROUND
ME.

**BUT
EVEN
SO...**

IT'S
TRUE THAT
WHEN THOSE
TWO MADE
HOLMES-
SAN MAD,
HE
WAS KIND
OF INTIMI-
DATING...

NO,
I WASN'T
SCARED.



SEEING
YOU TRYING
TO DEFEND
SOMEONE
IMPORTANT
TO YOU...

I
ACTUALLY
THOUGHT
THAT WAS
REALLY
COOL.

IN
THE HEAT
OF THE
MOMENT,

ALL
I SAW WAS
HOW PROUD YOU
WERE OF THE
OWNER AND HOW
MUCH YOU CARE
ABOUT HIM.



...THANK YOU,
AOI-SAN.



HOW
LONG ARE
YOU GOING TO
STAND THERE,
KIYOTAKA?



HONESTLY...



COME
ALONG
ALREADY
!

I CAN'T
HANDLE
ALL THESE
PEOPLE
MYSELF!



IT SEEMS
I STILL CAN'T
COMPETE
WITH HIM.

CHAPTER 12
END